

[The River and Creek Shores of New York City]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Saul Levitt

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace, New York City

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SUBJECT LOCAL LIFE AND INDUSTRY: (THE RIVER AND CREEK SHORES OF NEW YORK CITY)

I can't live in an apartment no more. I get cramped when I visit anybody in the City the steam heat gets me. Look at the way you're dressed and me I go around in pants and undershirt until late October. I don' wanna tell you anything I've gotta story, live got a lot of stories but I wanna get something for 'em. You know what I mean, it's your job to get stories but I wanna get something for 'em. You don't think they'd pay something for a story I got one about a trip yeah. That's a story but I wouldn't give it away for nothing. (At this point informant began rummaging through books on shelves in kitchen and living room. Titles were of technical books on engineering, heating etc. Found manuscripts of trip to Long Branch which describes a difficult trip through the treacherous currents and sometimes against the tides to Long Branch New Jersey).

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Yeah, I learned all about navigation that time. You got a lot of traffic on the river. Maybe I'll let you take a little bit out of that story so maybe it'll get advertised. Isn't that possible?

It's funny but it's human nature you'd never think a man could get used to it. There's good and bad features in a depression if there was no depression I'd never be out here. I know this Sound — no, ain't anything I ever heard that's interesting around here. The people here don't like me and I keep my mouth shut. I don't mix with them. I'm an anti-Nazi even if I'm German by background but I wanna tell you about Nelson, (referring to boathouse owner farther down the shore), no, I don't mean the old man but his son he's a fascist. Am I sure? Well, I don't mean he's a fascist but he thinks that way but he ain't a real one. Yeah, he just got those ideas in his mind that's what I mean. What do we do here in the winter? I get a job once in a while. In the winter you just get snow but you'd be surprised what you can get used to I'd never thought eight years ago I could live out here. I can't fish, isn't that funny, I'm not superstitious. I guess the fish don't like my line. I once had two butterfish going around my hook I clocked them thirteen minutes by the clock. Now you and Jack and Jill can set your lines in the water on the other hand and I can take those lines and the fish'll bite. No, I'm not superstitious but that's the way it works, they don't bite at my lines. All my good-time Charley friends don't see me anymore but I can get along without them. You got people who say they ain't afraid of the Sound but they don't got out at night. Now I know this Sound. I can find my way around in the dark without lights but I'd like to see some of them try it. Does it get rough on the Sound? I've seen nine foot whitecaps on the Sound. Yeah, it's getting high now, sometimes it covers up that grass. We get freak tides. Yeah, once only since I've been here.

It came right up to the dock. How did I get to this barge? It was moved here, then it was scuttled. I can't tell you how because that's in my story. My wife never had nothing to do with water either but it's accumulatin'. She couldn't live in an apartment no more. My boy? He was sickly in the City but he's all-right here.

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(Referring to neighbor on the other side of railroad trestle, living in a house on stilts on sandbar): he's a Southerner, he aint modern that feller Coward, that's a Tobacco Road family. Did I ever see Tobacco Road? No, but I know what it is. If I had the money I'd see the show.

(At this point interview terminated with promise of other interviews; interviewer discovered that high tide had risen so that it was necessary to take off shoes and stockings and wade across to railroad embankment). Informant called over:

If you know anybody that want's to go sailing some afternoon bring 'em out here I got a sailboat right near the bridge sixteen feet. I named her Rover [11?] after my lifeboat.